

REMARKS

Status Summary

Claims 1-22 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-22 presently stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). Claims 18 and 20 have been amended herein. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-22 presently stand rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,003,757 to Hill.

(i) The Examiner's Position

With reference to claims 1, 9, 17, 2, and 10, it is the Examiner's position that Hill discloses a chute apparatus comprising: a chute flap/deflector (14) in open/closed positions & pivotally attached to the housing; a retaining flap/mounting bracket (40 & T-swivel 20) moveably attached to the housing, so the retaining flap/bracket's at least one portion can move generally in the vertical direction; and a retaining flap that is independent of the (chute) flap, or not part or integral of the (chute) flap.

The Examiner further contends that Hill discloses: the retaining flap having first & second sections perpendicular to each other (referencing present claims 17, 7, and 15); the chute flap and/or retaining flap being biased in the open or closed positions (referencing present claims 3, 11, 6, and 14); the chute flap comprising flange & wall portions (referencing present claims 4 and 12); the retaining flap, for example via ref

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30, cross portion, pivotally attached to the housing (referencing present claims 5 and 13); and the chute flap & the retaining flap rotatable about substantially perpendicular axes (referencing present claims 22, 8, and 16). The Examiner also states that the structure disclosed by Hill renders method claims 18-21 inherent.

These positions are respectfully traversed as described further below.

(ii) Applicant's Response

Hill discloses a close-trim discharge deflector assembly for a lawn mower. The deflector assembly includes a deflector **14** that is hinged to a mower deck **12** and that is pivotable both horizontally and vertically at its leading edge using a T-shaped swivel **20**. T-shaped swivel **20** comprises a shaft **22** and a cross portion **30**. T-swivel shaft **22** acts as a hinge pin to allow T-swivel **20** to rotate with respect to mower deck **12** in the horizontal plane for the rotation of deflector **14** in the horizontal direction. T-swivel cross portion **30** includes a sleeve **32** and a pin **34**, which extend through holes **36, 38** in a mounting bracket **40** that is fixedly attached to deflector **14**. Pin **34** retains deflector **14** on T-swivel **20** and allows deflector **14** to be rotated in the vertical direction. A single spring **52** is attached between deflector **14** and mower deck **12** such that deflector **14** is biased in a horizontal and extended position. Deflector **14** may be latched by a spring latch **56** and catch **58** such that when deflector **14** is moved to a minimum clearance or closed position, deflector **14** can be retained in that position by moving the end of latch **56** over catch **58**.

While the Examiner contends that Hill discloses a chute flap/deflector (**14**) in open/closed positions & pivotally attached to the housing, a retaining flap/mounting

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bracket (40 & T swivel 20) moveably attached to the housing, and that the retaining flap is independent of the (chute) flap, or not part or integral of the (chute) flap, applicant notes that as shown in Figures 3 and 5 (and in phantom in Figures 2 and 4) of Hill and specifically described (for example at column 3, lines 19-20), mounting bracket 40 is attached to chute deflector 14. This attachment of mounting bracket 40 to deflector 14 is a fixed attachment, such that when mounting bracket 40 is rotated about T-swivel cross portion 30 (including sleeve 32 and pin 34) in a vertical direction, deflector 14 is concurrently rotated. Likewise, when deflector 14 is rotated in the horizontal axis about T-swivel shaft 22, mounting bracket 40 is also rotated horizontally. This fixed attachment of mounting bracket 40 to deflector 14 is required in order for chute deflector 14 to be rotated vertically about T-swivel cross portion 30 and is required in order for chute deflector 14 to be rotated horizontally about T-swivel shaft 22. As such, there is no movement of mounting bracket 40 between a retaining position and a non-retaining position that is independent of the movement of chute deflector 14 as recited in independent claims 1, 9, 18, and 20.

In contrast, independent claim 1 of the present subject matter recites a chute flap selectively movable between a closed chute flap position and an open chute flap position, and a retaining flap selectively movable independent of the chute flap between a retaining position and a non-retaining position wherein the retaining flap can in its retaining position provide support to maintain the chute flap in either its closed or open chute flap position. As described above, Hill teaches and discloses that mounting bracket 40 (i.e., what the Examiner refers to as the "retaining flap") is

fixedly attached to deflector 14 such that mounting bracket 40 and deflector 14 both rotate vertically about T-swivel cross portion 30 and both rotate horizontally about T-swivel shaft 22. This inherent design of the retaining flap (mounting bracket 40) of Hill requires that the retaining flap not be selectively movable independent of the chute flap.

Hill therefore does not disclose each and every element of independent claim 1, namely, a chute flap being selectively movable between a closed chute flap position and an open chute flap position, and a retaining flap being selectively movable independent of the chute flap between a retaining position and a non-retaining position wherein the retaining flap can in its retaining position provide support to maintain the chute flap in either its closed or open chute flap position. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 1 and its depending claims 2-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon Hill should be withdrawn.

Independent claim 9, like claim 1, recites that the retaining flap is selectively movable independent of the chute flap between a retaining position and a non-retaining position and that the retaining flap is adapted to overlap at least a portion of the chute flap to maintain the chute flap in its closed chute flap position. The arguments set forth above with respect to claim 1 relating to the teaching of Hill, wherein mounting bracket 40 (i.e., what the Examiner refers to as the "retaining flap") is fixedly attached to deflector 14 such that mounting bracket 40 and deflector 14 both rotate vertically about T-swivel cross portion 30 and both rotate horizontally about T-swivel shaft 22 (i.e., the retaining flap is not selectively movable independent

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of the chute flap), apply with respect to claim 9 as well. In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 9 and its depending claims 10-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon Hill should be withdrawn.

Independent claim 17 recites a chute flap selectively movable between a closed chute flap position and an open chute flap position, and a retaining flap having a first section pivotally attached to mowing machine housing and a second section disposed at least generally perpendicularly to the first section wherein the second section is adapted to overlap at least a portion of the chute flap to maintain the chute flap in its closed chute flap position. With reference to Figure 3 of Hill, the Examiner contends that Hill teaches a retaining flap having first and second sections perpendicular to each other, by referencing the T-swivel **20** as having sections and the mounting bracket **40** as having “generally” perpendicular sections. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

As shown in Figures 3 and 5 of Hill, the “first and second” sections of mounting bracket **40** are designed to be at an angle of approximately 30 to 45 degrees to one another. This design is so that mounting bracket **40** can be fixedly attached to chute deflector **14** and the “center” section of mounting bracket **40** (the bent section between the “first and second” sections) can mount on T-swivel cross portion **30** for rotation of chute deflector **14** in a vertical direction. As such, applicant respectfully submits that the “first and second” sections of mounting bracket **40** are not “generally” perpendicular to one another, as in the present subject matter, and in fact mounting bracket **40** as designed would not function properly if these sections were

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generally perpendicular to one another due to the need for the angled section of mounting bracket 40 to angle downwardly for attachment to deflector 14. Additionally, the "center" section of mounting bracket 40 is mounted on T-swivel cross portion 30, wherein T-swivel 20 is then rotatably mounted within mower deck 12 via T-swivel shaft 22. As such, the "first" section of mounting bracket 40 is not pivotally attached to the housing of the mowing machine as defined in claim 17 of the present subject matter. Therefore, there is no teaching or suggestion in Hill of a retaining flap with a first section pivotally attached to the housing and a second section disposed at least generally perpendicularly to the first section wherein the second section is adapted to overlap at least a portion of the chute flap to maintain the chute flap in its closed chute flap position. Applicant respectfully submits therefore that the rejection of claim 17 and its depending claim 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon Hill should be withdrawn.

Amended independent claim 18 is directed to a method for moving a chute apparatus of a mowing machine and recites lifting a retaining flap moveably attached to a housing on a mowing machine wherein at least a portion of the retaining flap moves in a direction at least generally vertically away from the housing, and wherein the retaining flap moves from a retaining position to a non-retaining position to allow a chute flap attached to the mowing machine to move independent of the retaining flap from a closed position to an open position whereby the chute flap provides a discharge chute. As discussed above, mounting bracket 40 of Hill is fixedly attached to deflector 14 such that mounting bracket 40 and deflector 14 both rotate vertically

about T-swivel cross portion 30 and both rotate horizontally about T-swivel shaft 22.

As such, mounting bracket 40 moves in tandem with deflector 14 and does not move from a retaining position to a non-retaining position independent of deflector 14. In other words, because mounting bracket 40 is fixedly attached to deflector 14, the positioning of mounting bracket 40 does not change in relation to deflector 14 regardless of whether deflector 14 is in an open position or a closed position and there is no independent movement of the two structures. There is no teaching or suggestion in Hill of moving a retaining flap from a retaining position to a non-retaining position to allow a chute flap attached to the mowing machine to move independent of the retaining flap from a closed position to an open position whereby the chute flap provides a discharge chute. As such, applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent claim 18 and its depending claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon Hill should be withdrawn.

Amended independent claim 20 is directed to a method for moving a chute apparatus of a mowing machine and recites a step of lifting a retaining flap moveably attached to a housing on a mowing machine from a retaining position to a non-retaining position by pivoting the retaining flap along a first axis wherein at least a portion of the retaining flap moves in a direction at least generally vertically away from the housing for the retaining flap to allow a chute flap attached to the mowing machine to pivot independent of the retaining flap along a second axis from a closed position to an open position whereby the chute flap provides a discharge chute. As discussed above with respect to claim 18, there is no teaching or suggestion in Hill of

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moving a retaining flap from a retaining position to a non-retaining position to allow a chute flap attached to the mowing machine to move independent of the retaining flap from a closed position to an open position whereby the chute flap provides a discharge chute. Claim 20 further recites that the first axis on which the retaining flap is pivoted and the second axis on which the chute flap is pivoted are substantially perpendicular to one another. As discussed above, mounting bracket **40** of Hill is fixedly attached to deflector **14** such that mounting bracket **40** and deflector **14** both rotate vertically about T-swivel cross portion **30** and both rotate horizontally about T-swivel shaft **22**. As such, mounting bracket **40** moves in tandem with deflector **14**, and therefore Hill does not provide a retaining flap that pivots along a first axis that is substantially perpendicular to a second axis to which a chute flap pivots, as recited in claim 20 of the present subject matter. Therefore, applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent claim 20 and its depending claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon Hill should be withdrawn.

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CONCLUSION

In light of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in proper condition for allowance, and an early notice to such effect is earnestly solicited.

If any small matter should remain outstanding after the Patent Examiner has had an opportunity to review the above amendments and remarks, the Patent Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned patent attorney in order to resolve these matters and avoid the issuance of another Official Action.

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

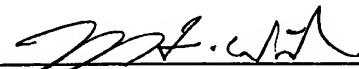
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with the filing of this correspondence to Deposit Account No. 50-0426.

Respectfully submitted,

JENKINS, WILSON & TAYLOR, P.A.

Date: 5-18-05

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JLW/EEM/alb